

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.
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BROTHERS ALL —
GREETINGS FROM ROUNDUP
AND MAY YOUR NEW
YEAR BE REPLETE
WITH THE
GOOD THINGS OF LIFE

DIME NOVEL DAYS

A Philadelphian Who Was a Prolific
Writer of That School

May 1, 1922

Frederick Van Renselaer Dey, the man who wrote a "Nick Carter" story every week for twenty years, was probably the most prolific of all the writers of popular fiction developed by the story papers and "libraries" of the last generation. The mere physical feat of turning out forty million words dealing with over a thousand hair-raising adventures and thrilling feats of the master detective is so marvelous as to seem incredible if it were not authenticated beyond all question of doubt. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century and through the first decade of the twentieth the production of popular fiction to be published serially in one or other of the weeklies devoted to purveying that kind of fare or issued in weekly "libraries" was an industry of extraordinary proportions. The Indian story, of adventures in the wild and woolly West, and the detective story appealed to one class of readers, mostly the masculine gender, while highly colored, sentimental and dramatic romances were insistent in their irresistible appeal to the gentler sex. The news-stands were laden with them, and for a nickel or a dime one could purchase breathless excitement or entertainment to last several hours.

Beadle's "libraries" became a by-word for supposedly mischievous literature, and yet it is questionable if their tone was not quite as healthful as that which obtains in many of the "best sellers" today. It is a mistake to assume that the "Beadle" appeal was merely to newsboys and boot-blacks or the half baked intelligences of the community. Take the "Nick Carter" stories for example, and they were to be found in the hands of men of large business interests and public affairs who did not hesitate to acknowledge that they sought mental relaxation in following the marvelous detective's hairbreadth adventures. Moreover this particular series was translated into more than thirty languages, and an American diplomatist found them literally from China to Peru, in Japan and in the Balkans, with distinguished states-

men among the regular subscribers as well as the eager populace.

Fred Dey did not precisely originate "Nick Carter." The detective was first created by another writer who projected a character presumably to follow in the footsteps of "Old Sleuth," "Old Cap Collier" and other Secret Service operators and trailers of criminals who were then famous in the "libraries" and selling like the proverbial hot cakes. The publisher who had copyrighted the name in connection with the first story turned it over to Fred Dey with a contract to write one "Nick Carter" story a week. He developed amazing facility for improving adventures for his hero, whose fame grew so rapidly that in a few years he drove "Old Sleuth" and "Old Cap Collier" and all other rivals into exile. This enormous activity began in 1890, and continued until the "libraries" were partly driven out of the field by the rising tide of popular magazines, which supplied the craving for exciting and romantic fiction and finally routed by the movies. How nearly related the detective stories of today are to those of the "Nick Carter" type is shown by the fact that after the disappearance of his invincible hero Fred Dey continued to write detective novels under different pen-names including that of "Varick Vanardy." These were issued in bound volumes at regular prices.

The whole history of that period and phase of American authorship and publishing deserves to be written and it is to be hoped that William J. Benners, of Philadelphia, will undertake the task for which he is exceptionally well qualified. For not only was Mr. Benners a prolific author himself, but he has been personally acquainted with most of the writers and has collected every known specimen of these "libraries" which he could procure by any possible exertion. Sentimental young women who still respond to the dramatic and really well-plotted novels which were familiar to their mothers would marvel if the broad shouldered six footer who is known to the neighbors as William J. Benners should be introduced to them as "Bertha M. Clay." Yet there he stands, the writer of fervid and enthralling romances under his name, which have attained a

circulation which makes that of the best sellers of today look insignificant. He did not write all the "Bertha M. Clay" novels, but ten or a dozen of them are on his list. He acknowledges "Magdalene's Mystery," "The Second Mrs. Darlington," "Jeffrey Dane's Heirs," "Lady Vandower's Crime," "Curse of the Opals," "By Fate's Decree," "Percival Power," "Woven on Fate's Loom" and others of similar dramatic and romantic qualities.

How it came that a man or men happened to be employed to write novels of essentially feminine appeal may now be told. An English woman named Charlotte B. Braeme wrote several of these popular novels so that it was deemed advisable to publish some of her stories in America under a different name. So her initials, C. M. B., were reversed and the name "Bertha M. Clay" was devised. The author died suddenly, leaving an unfinished serial in course of publication. Another writer was hastily called in to complete the story and performed the task in an eminently satisfactory manner. It was then decided to continue issuing novels by "Bertha M. Clay" to satisfy the demand, and in this enterprise Mr. Benners was enlisted. He possessed the necessary invention and imagination, and hundreds of thousands of devoted admirers worshiped at the shrine of Bertha M. Clay. The Charlotte M. Braeme and Bertha M. Clay novels in paper covers are still on the market, but no titles have been added in a dozen years.

Reverting to Fred Dey and the stories of his daredevil detective, intimate friends of his are telling about his methods of work and his poor remuneration. He is still said to have written the first story on a challenge working all through the night and producing the completed manuscript in the morning. This is somewhat incredible, but Dey worked with astonishing rapidity seated at his typewriter, and produced about 6,000 words a day. He never worked out a plot in advance, but trusted to the inspiration of his rushing narrative, and he placed great reliance on the subconscious operation of the mind during his sleep to clear away all complications. One of his tales, entitled "The Magic Story," was trans-

lated into at least seventeen languages, and circulated in millions of copies. Yet his only remuneration was the \$50 paid for it by a magazine. Dey was proud of Nick Carter, and regarded him as a genuine addition to American literature. So tremendous was the demand for him that his creator followed the example of the great Alexander Dumas and broke in ten or a dozen assistants. But he claimed 1,076 of the stories for his own.

Though Philadelphia was the residence of several writers of the popular fiction of the last generation, most of the authors who devised series like "Deadwood Dick" and "Nick Carter" were obliged to live in close contact with the publishers. It was not uncommon for the publisher to employ several writers in the same series, all using the same name and exploiting the same indomitable hero. This was because such amazing facility as that of Fred Dey was exceptional. He believed that the movies were the final cause of the disappearance of the "libraries", and he was despondent over the thought that a revival of these publications was impossible. He was ever hopeful of seeing Nick Carter in the films, but the hope was never realized. The personalities behind the story papers and "libraries" were mysterious, but human, and their unveiling in such a books as William J. Benners might write would be a most illuminating revelation of a once thriving American industry, the fiction factory.

WORLD-FAMOUS AUTHOR

By Hermon Pitcher

EXPLANATORY

This biographical matter (independent of either of the series of the several small volumes of the popular fiction writers of the past, of which will be the first) is a result of correspondence during 1939 and 1940 between Marie Louise Brame and the present writer. Many letters were exchanged between us, besides gifts to each other. More data concerning the famous English author would yet have come to me, had it not been for the death of the daughter who had so generously supplied it. Several photographs of the author and of her

family were sent to me, some of which will be included in the volume.

PREFACE

This is a story of Charlotte M. Braeme, a very industrious English woman, the wife of a London jeweler and the mother of nine children. She was an author of much popular fiction—perhaps forty or fifty long novels, besides many novelettes and short stories. Altho her own life, beautiful with its deeds of love and charity, was, relatively speaking, obscure to the public, her fascinating work, written in the mid-Victorian period, and which the public so admired, was translated into several foreign languages and circulated all over the civilized world. Some of these novels have also been printed in Braille type for the blind.

Charlotte M. Braeme was a genius in the conception and development of strong literary plots. Her work has been acclaimed by the public for three quarters of a century and there is little indication of its waning. Publishers have derived fortunes from its sales, altho for reasons explained in the biography, comparatively little money came to the gifted author whose name is a synonym of allurements within printed pages to millions of readers of two hemispheres.

Stories of crime have been in vogue for many years. Mrs. Braeme often wrote of crime and its far-reaching influences and consequences. She excelled in the plotting of mysteries and the conjuring of tragedies.

Her own life was a mystery to her vast hosts of readers, for nothing has been told of it until the present time. It was tragic, also, in the environment and circumstances which she, herself, made. She met an untimely fate, almost sixty years ago, and he, who had been her husband-lover for a score of years, killed himself because of his great grief and loss for her.

Charlotte M. Braeme's last surviving child died in April, 1941, in war-torn London. And now the story of her mother—this novelist, still read so many years after her death in the 1880s—is at last told to the world; told to a public which, generation after generation, has read, and is still reading, her enchanted work.

Not only was some of it published under her own name in the English

periodicals, but much also under fictitious names and initials, and some anonymously. A great deal of her work has been known to American readers under the pen-name of "Bertha M. Clay," given her by a well-known New York publishing company.

That so many American admirers of the work of Charlotte M. Braeme have been disappointed (until they learned to glance discriminately thru it before buying or reading) in getting a Clay novel, so utterly unlike the English writer's in literary style and forceful or fanciful context of subject matter, has been due to this American firm which has foisted for a long period of time many inferior novels upon an unsuspecting public.

These were written by a staff of men, usually Americans especially employed for this purpose. In them were, sometimes, points of similarity to the English novelist's magic productions, but they were never successfully imitated. In time the pseudonym "Bertha M. Clay" became a trade-mark by this New York publishing house. Several of these hired "Clay" writers—and some of them were writers of note and well known to literary critics—wrote for other publishing houses under their real names, while concealing their identity under this universally-famous appellation.

The novels of Charlotte M. Braeme were published in clothbound covers both in England and in America, usually at a dollar and a half each, and in paper covers in prices ranging from twenty-five cents to a dime. Those who have read the Braeme novels forty or fifty years ago, and then in later years, find that they are captivated anew in interest when they re-read them. And now a new generation reads them with the same degree of enjoyment.

Stories of crime and of intrigue have flooded the public for many years like the waves of a restless sea. Most of them have been immoral, gory, and shocking and were written only for the purpose of thrilling readers for the gaining of "filthy lucre."

The tales of crime and of mysteries and of tragedies by Mrs. Braeme are entirely different. They leave no

haunting memories of unpleasantness to linger in the reader's mind, but, rather, present a strong object lesson. The works of this writer are not all of crime and its punishment. Some of them bear no hint of the shadow of sin, but are stories of romances and of heroism.

Since the worn-out body of Charlotte M. Braeme was laid beneath the sod of a little English village cemetery, almost sixty years ago, her nephews and grand-nephews have fought in wars in defense of their country. Some of them were wounded in the Chinese Boxer Rebellion in 1900, and others lost their lives in the World War of 1914-1918. And now another generation has sprung up to fight in the Second World War and young descendants of the famous author are valiantly contending for England's freedom.

The colorful stories—some of them sprinkled with the beauty of prose poetry—of this gallant, gay, little woman who wrote them so many years ago are still being published by several firms. In spite of the many forms of entertainment for "our boys", we predict that they will be almost as widely enjoyed in army and navy camp as they were in the World War, a quarter of a century ago.

"Being dead, she yet speaketh."

NOVELNUT NONSENSE

WHEN Bro. Frye advised us that Mary Ann Gash objected to ROUND-UP publicity, we advised him to apologize. It appears that Bob went at it the wrong way and ran into a left-cross of Mary's, and while his past life did not flash before his eyes or anything like that, Bob heard factory-whistles and sleigh bells. And then, he adds; "the little minks throwed me for a goal". Bob scales 257 lbs. Miss Gash, Bob's "finance" as he calls Mary, must be a rare minx to score a goal on him. Hats off to her damp nose.

WAR: Bro. Moran has arrived in Europe with his scatter-gun. Pat says it is time to do something about it.

FINIS: Our great naturalist, Bro. Miller is through with horse-racing. It happened again, Cleve lost. He states that the ONLY way to make

money following the ponies, is with a stout street-broom.

Bro. Caldwell's terrapin ranch has proved to be a dud. To stimulate the sale of novels, Ray will include a mud-turtle with each order. One to a customer. Each mud-turtle has a cord attached to it's tail to swing it by.

BRIEF MENTION: Bro. Hardin has loaned his pet rattlesnakes to Bro. McIntyre for temperance-lecture purposes. AND Bro. Pitcher's goldfish with the maroon eyes is dead, while his tame pelican has a stiff neck. AND Bro. Smith of Lawrence, has made a will leaving all of his jack to a home for cats. AND Bro. Cummings states that his trained baboon-butler is now house-broke.

BY JUPITER OLYMPUS! (Jupe for short!), did we, or did we not see Brothers Bragin and French, with eyes streaming tears, sobbing bitterly on each other's shoulders? The past is buried once again. A most pathetic reconciliation.

SUCH IS LIFE: Time, 3:30 A. M. Bro. Burns crawls out of bed. Bill has rheumatics, and has developed housemaid's knee. His aged joints make crackling sounds. He, absent-mindedly, cusses the Guv'mint. Bill scrubs his ears and forgets his neck. Breakfasts on his favorite dish of tripe and turnips, and tops off with a hooter of vodka. He drinks nothing stronger. He crackles off to the cowshed and four bells finds him sitting under a cow. A steady stream of plague, malediction, and cusses float from the open door arousing wonder, awe, admiration and envy. Bill crackles back to the house with his milk-bucket, then crackles out to the stable and leads forth the old mare, Penelope. She looks like a camel with a kind'o dished-in face. Bill tenderly fingers his much abused and badly abraded hind-puffs, gingerly mounts his fiery steed, and is off for a day of wild adventure in the cabbage-patch. Night finds our hero in his lean-to studio which he has sumptuously furnished with two sand-bays and a candle, shadow-boxing with his MAGNUS OPUS, a monograph on seed-warts, stinking up the premises with fumes from the wreck of a 5-ct. cigar until the graveyard-watch. And so, to bed. And our old

Lily-of-the-Valley can Snore. Sounds like he was drowning.

NOTICE: The rumor that Bro. Morrill is giving cash-prizes to all Club members who apply, cannot be confirmed.

NEWS

Judge W. G. Bramham, the Czar of Minor League Baseball, has presented his great collection of baseball books to the Baseball Museum in Cooperstown, N. Y. Included are all the Merriwell baseball stories and other dime novels on this sport.

There was some lively bidding for the dime novels in the recent auction sale of the Barber collection, but almost all went to one buyer, an old-time Brotherhood member. Very few knew that Barber was buying dime novels during his lifetime. There are undoubtedly many collectors of his class interested!

The New York Public Library has a famous collection of Beadle dime novels, but lacks those of other publishers; to make up for same, Charles Bragin has presented to the Library a complete set of the missing publications, so that it now has, for use of students, every dime and nickel novel library and weekly from 1860 to 1928. A similar presentation was made by Mr. Bragin to the Library of Congress some years ago.

Thanks to the most energetic work of ye editor Ralph Cummings, there is more activity now in our hobby than has been the case for some years.

The finest dime novel article ever to appear in a newspaper was published in the N. Y. World Telegram, in three issues, Oct. 28, 29 and 30, 1941. Written by special feature writer Douglas Gilbert, who devoted a great deal of time to research work on the subject.

A recently published "history" of detective stories failed to include any mention of dime novel sleuth tales—in spite of the fact that almost 5,000 were published. Very likely the author never saw a dime novel! The dime novel publishers were the first to see the possibilities in this field, and cashed in heavily on Old Sleuth, Nick Carter, Old King Brady, Old Cap Collier, etc. long before the "hard-cover" book trade did.

NEWSY NEWS

By Ye Editor

We hear that W. C. Krumbein of Chicago, expects to visit the West coast in the coming year. Also expects to visit the University of California. Well Pard, while you are out there, some of our brotherhood will be very glad to meet you and talk over the old times, you know.

Just think, we have 150 members this year. This is the most we've ever had. Long Live the Happy Hours Brotherhood and the Dime Novel Roundup. And thanks to our printer, The Miller Print Shop, Lawrence, Kansas, for the fine service they have given us in the past, and many, many years to come, we hope. We wish them a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and lots of business.

Just think, Mrs. Brezinsky is offering a nice lot of colored covers or (Paints) for sale, such as Pluck & Luck, Fame & Fortune, Union Jack, Happy Days, and so forth. See her address in the last issue of Roundup.

Have you seen the fine articles in the write-ups by Douglas Gilbert, lots of good information, data, etc., as told to him by our mutual brother Charles Bragin. So we have these fine articles to credit to him, as follows: November 17th, 18th and 19th, 1941, in the Fort Worth Press, Fort Worth, Texas, Nov. 17, "Dime Novels of Heroic Period in American Life Now are Sought by Collectors, Including President." Nov. 18th, "Old Sleuth, A Dime Novel Top Hero, Had Dignity at First But slumped When New Author Took Him Over," Nov. 19th "Frank Merriwell Ushered in Final Stage of Dime Novels." Lots of nice illustrations, too. Same articles appeared in the N. Y. World for Oct. 28th, 29th and 30th.

Say Fellows, do you want an almanac on the old dime and nickel novels, story papers, their writers, etc. for 1942? If so, write ye editor of Roundup.

If you have any articles of interest on the old timers mentioned above, send 'em in for publication in same. Also ads. Ad rates will be 1c per word, quarter page \$1.00, half page \$1.50, or full page \$2.00.

The Almanac will be the same size as the Roundup. It will be very in-

teresting and full of lots of nice things too. Send anything of interest, even your own birthday.

Ha, here we are again, with another rare thriller of the old '60's, with flash covers, and what-not. Munro's Backwoods Series No. 2. Title, "The Mysterious Hunter, or The Man of Death" by Capt. L. C. Carleton. Sold for 20c. Size 6 x 9 inches, yellow-salmon covers, 88 pages, double column, nice illustrations on front cover, also inside cover. Has list of Munros Ten Cent Novels Nos. 1 to 197 on the inside of front cover, and on the inside of the back cover Nos. 198 to 347. Sounds interesting, doesn't it? Also six illustrations throughout the novel. Published in 1868, a rare copy.

Ye editor has had five teeth yanked out, as they were out of working order, and of no use to the owner, so to the dentist, one day he went, and he misses them, I really do, for I can't chew a thing, so I'll have to get some store teeth, or horse teeth pretty soon. I feel as if I had been in a fight and got the worst of it.

Joseph Krajic of Canton, Ohio, says he attended a churchmen's luncheon club in October in the local Y. M.

C. A. The speaker was Rev. Walter F. Tunks, pastor of St. Paul's Episcopal church of Akron, Ohio, and member No. 127 of the H. H. Bro. His talk was on "Peeps into Our Sub-Literary Past." Joe says Dr. Tunks has a fine collection of novels, and that he was a fine speaker. Joe had a fine time, makes us all wish we were there, too.

PARTIAL LIST OF ALL 1941-1942 MEMBERS OF H. H. B.

- Nos.
9. Fred T. Singleton, 2000-B. S. W., Red Road, Coral Gables, Fla.
 12. George French, 121 W. Passaic Ave., Bloomfield, N. J.
 35. Herbert Leitstein, 8733 Bay St., Brooklyn, N. Y.
 38. Carl Linville, 2734 Madison Rd., Cincinnati, Ohio.
 51. Harold C. Holmes, 672 Chapel St., New Haven, Conn.
 57. Leonard C. Leighter, 89 Perkins St., Brockton, Mass.
 91. Wm. H. Gander, Box 60, Transcona, Man. Canada.
 150. Alexander Baum, 620 Margaret St., Pittsburgh (10) Pa. (new member).

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If you have any of the Merriwells in New Medal Library, send numbers to James E. Knott, Bristol, N. H.

Thousands of Dime Novels to trade. Send for my 7-page Swap List. R. Bragin, 1525 W. 12th St., Brooklyn, New York.

Can any one tell me the Titles and Authors of Frank Starr's American Novels Nos. 188, 189, 190, 191, also 222 to end. I will appreciate this information very much—Ye Editor.

Want—Adventure Library #66 for my own file. Name your price. Eli A. Messier, 117 Morton Avenue, Woonsocket, R. I.

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